32.

The Nonconformiſt's VINDICATION: OR, Mr. Furguſon's Fault No General CRIME.

FOR aſmuch as we are bound by the common Law of friendſhip and ſelf preſervation, to take care of one anothers good and benefit, as all Marriners, when the Ship is in danger to be overwhelmed with waves, or doth receive in Water at ſome unhappy leak, are ready to lay particularly all their hands to the Pump, to ſave their own Lives, as well as the Lives of all their Society: ſo I cannot ſatisfye my ſelf to ſee my Brethren fall or ſink into the Pit of deſpair of ever enjoying their Liberties and Priviledges again without ſaying ſomething that may tend to ſtop that current of diſgrace that is now as it were running down like a mighty Stream, and by force carrying them, till it ſplit againſt the Rock of the diſpleaſure of their Prince, and ſo bring puniſhments on the Guilty and Innocent both alike; and therefore ſomething I ſhall ſay by way of Conceſſion, *viz.* That there is, as I am ſatisfyed by his Majeſties Declaration, a Conſpiracy, acted no doubt by perſons diſaffected to the preſent Government and it may be for no other reaſon but becauſe it is Government, and therefore contrary to the wiſhes and private deſires of their ambitious minds; but all ſuch actings we with great deteſtations abhor, as contrary to the Apoſtles rule

rule to be ſubject for Conſcience ſake; theſe I ſay, we as much as any would, abhor, as men whoſe being is deſtructive to the Eſſence or Conſtitution of Government as being perſons acted, we are certain, by no principles of a right guided Conſcience; but then we muſt diſtinguiſh between them and us, for tho men of great Spirits and great power may be blown up as it were to run above and beyond their own Sphear, yet there is no reaſon that we ſhould be brought in to Act a part where it cannot be ſuppoſed we could have one; for it is well known that theſe great perſons were far enough from owning, ſuccouring or countenancing of us; that great perſon lately Executed for this preſent Conſpiracy, not a man of his acquaintance that appeared for him, known or ſuſpected to have any friendſhip for our Diſſenting Miniſters, himſelf a conſtant Communicant of the Church of *England*, his own Chappel ſupplyed by the moſt famed Pillars of it, and none of us with him during any part of his confinement; and for thoſe that are of the meaner ſort not known to be of our ſettled Congregation, but if they be ſo yet none of them can ſay, that they ever heard any thing in our Meetings that might any way tend to their exciting, or encouragement to this work ſo much to be deteſted by all perſons that have any ſenſe of religion, or fear of God before their Eyes. But then I meet with this common Objection among many people, *viz.* That we have in our Pulpits cryed againſt the coming in of Popery, and amuſed the people with the fear of it, that hath tended to blow up Firſt ſuſpition, and conſequently the taking theſe unlawful means to prevent it. To this I ſay, If we have Prayed againſt it and laboured to confirm thoſe that have attended our Congregations againſt that Religion, why even the beſt Divines in the Church have according to their duty done ſo too, and the late Popiſh Conſpiracy and the publick Humiliation for the begging a further Diſcovery and prevention of danger, Ordered by King, Lords and Commons, hath all tended to ſhew the fear of that Religion incroaching upon us; which God ſtill prevent and confirm his Church againſt a time of ſuch Tryal. But ſome will ſay, Theſe men in this Conſpiracy are Diſſentors, contained under the ſeveral names of *Independants Presbyterians*, &c. And you were for having all the Papiſts ſuffer, therefore why not you? No, hold! the parallel cannot be the ſame for we all know the Papiſts the Leaders and the Commonalty are always United, they profeſs the lawfulneſs of ſuch Horrid actions, and make it their buſineſs to teach men ſo, and it is well know, have been actors themſelves in all the conſpiracyes our modern Hiſtories acquaint us with, whereas we may truly ſay that if theſe men, being Diſſentors, have acted ſuch baſe things, they have not acted as Diſſentors, nor Proteſtants, therefore not as Proteſtant Diſſentors, and the paſſing ſo ſevere a Sentence as ſome have done, upon all the Diſſentors for the miſcarriage of ſome is like hanging all men of one Trade becauſe ſome of them take ill courſes which bring them to fall by the hand of Juſtice: and I may ſay our carriage hath been well known to be ſuch as hath made all lawful obedience to Governours, the rule by which it meaſured all its actions: We quietly yielded our livings being in the Miniſtry when his Majeſty call'd

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for us to leave them, or ſubſcribe to the preſent Conſtitutions, we made no murmurings no diſtractions, our Farewell Sermons were filled with no reflections, but we wholly reſigned our ſelves into the hands of God's Providence to provide for us. We then reſided quietly in our own Habitation gathered not Churches out of the Catholick eſtabliſhed Church, inſtructed our Neighbours and Families as one Chriſtian might do another, thus we liv'd till his Majeſties Gracious Indulgence, when having our liberty by that Grant, we exerciſed our Miniſtry and that quietly, as it is well known, moſt of us chooſing ſuch times as might not hinder the publick worſhip of God in the Church; when they were call'd in again, we forbore to Preach in our publick places and what ſince we have done till now our preſent Ceſſation, we confeſs, was by his Majeſties Gracious clemency; for we know in moſt Caſes of this nature forbearance is taken for ſome manner of allowance. But then you will ſay, Schiſm in the Church breeds Faction in the State too, and we are the occaſion of this. Now to this it may well be anſwered we go not about in our Meetings to draw or drive people from the Church we give no reaſons for Laymens diſſent from it, and our example of many of us for many years, as well as at preſent, hath taught men the duty of Lay-Conformity, and our Preaching hath been onely for the good of Souls.

One thing more I may not forget, that one of our Diſſenting Miniſters loſt his Head in the Antimonarchical times, for his Loyalty and fidelity to this our preſent Soveraign, and others the loſs of their Liberties, and we that are now ſo exclaimed againſt, when by his Father we were allowed our publick Miniſtry, and enjoyed Benefices in the Church, we then in the time of the late troubles loſt our Livings for not taking an ingagement to ſupport the then conſtituted Government without King and Houſe of Lords. And whereas of late there are ſome things Publiſhed that may be fathered upon us yet many of them being the opinions of Divines beyond Sea, with whom we had no converſe we are not to anſwer for them, we never eſponſed ſuch principles, and tho they, yet not we may be denominated deſtructive to the Government, and thoſe among us that may perhaps have writ ſomethings in the heat of the laſt troubles, without that due conſideration they ſhould have had, have been no ſtrangers to a Recantation of them. Thus much I thought fit to publiſh, that the Torrent of the Vulgar might be ſtopt, ſince ſome would go about to perſwade the World as if the Nonconforming Miniſters were actors in, or incouragers of the late Conſpiracy, ſo contrary to their practiſes and actions all along ſince that unhappy diſtinction of Nonconformiſts had riſe among us. And I wiſh that this may give ſome ſatisfaction that the Innocent and guilty may not ſuffer together, but that the impoveriſhing of ſo many of his Majeſties peaceable Subjects may be prevented, as muſt follow neceſſarily to the ſafety of the Government, if this principle be univerſally received.

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